

EXTENSION OF BRITISH SUPPORT TO THE WHO MALARIA PROJECT IN CAMBODIA

Phnom Penh, November 20 1998 - The World Health Organisation and the Government of Great Britain and Northern Ireland will today sign a Memorandum Of Understanding to extend the ongoing WHO malaria project until the year 2000. An additional US\$ 100,000 will be provided to the project to support malaria control activities bringing the total disbursements to US\$ 4,300,000.

The WHO malaria project in Cambodia was initiated in 1992 by malaria and public health specialists from WHO and the British Overseas Development Agency, now Department for International Development (DFID). Throughout the project's duration it has fully supported the work of the Ministry of Health and the National Malaria Programme.

The project in Cambodia is the oldest and largest WHO malaria control project and has gained international recognition as one of the most successful and innovative anti-malaria projects in the world. Its achievements include the training of over 1000 medical doctors in the treatment of severe malaria as well as the training of 1000 microscopists. The project's activities have resulted in a reduction in the number of deaths in hospitals caused by malaria by as much as 50% since 1992.

While further strengthening present capabilities in the hospitals, the project's new emphasis is on expanding the outreach for rapid diagnosis and adequate treatment to the rural areas where malaria is most prevalent. This year the project has provided training and supplies to over 120 rural health centres, enabling them to use a new diagnostic dipstick test in conjunction with mefloquine and newly developed drugs such as artemisinin suppositories for children and severely ill patients.

In the field of malaria prevention the project has provided over 180,000 insecticide impregnated mosquito nets sufficient to protect over 400,000 Cambodian men, women and children living in malarial areas. The project was successful in containing several malaria epidemics in former Khmer Rouge areas in 1996 and 1997 and has contributed to the prevention of large-scale malaria outbreaks so far this year.

Following the demise of the Khmer Rouge guerrilla movement in April 1998, large malarial areas have become accessible to the general population and massive migrations into these areas are now underway. This poses a threat of new malaria outbreaks in these areas and WHO is therefore most grateful for the timely extension and additional funding provided to the project at this critical time.

Dr G Petersen, Representative of the World Health Organisation and Her Majesty's Ambassador George Edgar will formally sign the Memorandum of Understanding on the extension of the malaria project at a ceremony at 11.30 Friday 20 November at the WHO office #120 Pasteur Street. There will be an opportunity for photographs.